

# CANADIAN PARENTS ON SCHOOL AND EDUCATION

*A Study Of Parents With Children In Grades 1-9 Reveals That Parents Hold A Wide Range Of Views When It Comes To Things Like Homework, Scholastic Achievement, Early Learning, Educational Goals, And After School Activities*



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## Canadian Parents On School And Education

### *A Study Of Parents With Children In Grades 1-9 Reveals That Parents Hold A Wide Range Of Views When It Comes To Things Like Homework, Scholastic Achievement, Early Learning, Educational Goals, And After School Activities*

**Toronto, ON** - According to a new Ipsos-Reid/Kumon survey of Canadian parents with children in grades 1-9, things like their child's homework, scholastic achievement, early learning, educational goals, and after-school activities, are issues that elicit a range of different opinions among Canadian parents.

Half of the parents surveyed in this study (51%) say their child does their homework immediately after school - with many doing their homework in busy household areas like the kitchen (45%) or dining room (22%). Further, half of parents (50%) also say their child does their homework in noisy environments; with things such as other people talking (20%), a television playing (19%), or music (11%) providing a noise-filled work environment.

And while one in ten (11%) parents say their child is doing their homework alone, most (82%) are either are doing their homework with a parent nearby (50%) or with a parent beside him/her (32%). On average half of parents surveyed (51%) spend 1 to 60 minutes a week providing their children with homework support - when stretched over a week this equates to an average of less than 10 minutes a day - even though 94% of parents surveyed are confident in helping their child with their homework.

For the most part, nine in ten parents surveyed (92%) believe their child is meeting (53%) or exceeding (39%) the scholastic expectations for their grade level. And when considering different school subjects - many parents say math is the most liked (34%) and most disliked (27%) subject for their child, though more say their child likes it than dislikes it.



Of parents surveyed, on average, they say it is appropriate to start doing early learning activities when a child is 3 years of age. However, parents' opinions about this issue are widespread.

Among the early learning activities parents say they have done with their children before they started school, the most popular activities were reading with their child (63%) and using reading (42%) and math (39%) activity books.

When considering the primary goal for their children's education, the largest portion (29%) of parents surveyed first mention, unaided, that the primary goal is to attend college or university, followed by getting a good/successful job (13%), and attending a secondary institution (11%).

When totalling *all* mentions made by the parents surveyed after being asked what is the primary goal for their children's education, the largest portion (36%) mention "attending college or university", followed by "to be happy in life" (27%), to "get a good/successful job" (23%), and gain "life skills/become a valuable member of society" (21%).

And, when the parents surveyed are asked to rank 7 education goals according to which ones are most important: "developing self management and life skills" (29%) gets ranked highest, followed by "developing good reading/literacy skills" (26%), "developing interpersonal skills" (15%), "developing good study habits" (14%), "achieving good grades" (10%), "developing good math/numerical skills" (4%), and lastly "developing recreational/leisure skills" (less than 1%).

The majority of parents surveyed (88%) say their children will be involved in at least one after school activity this school year - on average respondents say their child will participate in about 2 activities this school year. Sports are the preferred after school activity, with team sports being the activity of choice for more than half (57%) and individual sports for another



43%. But, almost one-third of children (31%) will be involved in music. Parents surveyed, on average, think their child will spend 4.6 hours a week doing after school activities, but the majority of parents (89%) feel they can manage this time well.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Kumon survey that was conducted nationally in Canada among 1040 Canadians who have children aged 6 to 14 years of age that attend public schools and do not have learning disabilities or special education needs. The study was fielded from August 19-27<sup>th</sup> 2004. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.0$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had this entire population been polled.*



## HOW ARE PARENTS HANDLING THEIR CHILD'S HOMEWORK RESPONSIBILITIES?

### *Half Of Parents (51%) Say Their Child Does Their Homework Right After School...*

Half of the parents surveyed (51%) say that during the week their child most often does their homework "immediately after school". One-third of these parents (36%) say their child most often does their homework "after dinner", while 4% say "just before bedtime", and 1% say "in the morning before school". Only 7% of the parents surveyed say there is "no usual time" that their child most often does their homework, and 1% of parents say they "don't know" when their child most often does their homework.

### *And Where Are Kids Doing Their Homework? Many Parents (45%) Say Their Kid Most Often Does Homework In The Kitchen...*

The largest portion of parents surveyed (45%) say their child most often does their homework in the "kitchen", while smaller groups mention other areas of a home such as the "dining room" (22%), "his/her bedroom" (16%), the "living room" (6%), a "home office" (3%) or the "basement" (1%) as places where their children most often do their homework. Meanwhile, 1% of parents surveyed offered some "other" room in the home as the place where their child most often does their homework, and 1% say their child doesn't do their homework at home but rather at their school.

- Parents of children in grades 7-9 (27%) are more likely than parents of children in grades 1-6 (9%) to say their child most often does their homework in "his/her bedroom".



- Parents of children in grades 1-6 are more likely than parents of children in grades 7-9 to say their child most often does their homework in more communal areas such as the “dining room” (28% vs. 20%) or the “kitchen” (55% vs. 43%).

### ***And Nearly All Parents (91%) Say Their Child Is Doing Homework Most Often At A Desk Or On A Table...***

Nearly all parents surveyed (91%) say their child is doing homework most often at a desk or on a table – only small percentages of the parents surveyed offer other work areas such as “on the couch” (3%), “on the floor” (3%), or “on the bed” (2%), and 1% of parents offer some “other” area.

- Parents of children in grades 1-6 are significantly more likely to say their child most often does their homework on a desk or at a table (95%) than are parents of children in grades 7-9 (85%).
- Parents of boys (94%) are more likely than parents of girls (88%) to say their child most often does their homework at a desk or on a table.

### ***But, Half Of Parents (51%) Say Their Child Most Often Does Their Homework In A Noise-Filled Environment...***

When considering where their child most often does their homework, half of parents surveyed (51%) say it is in a noise-filled environment: One in five say that most often their children do their homework in environments where “people are talking” (20%), the “TV is on” (19%), “music is on” (11%), or “pets are making noise” (1%).

However, half of parents surveyed (49%) say their children most often do their homework in an environment that is quiet.



- Parents of children in grades 7-9 are more likely than parents of children in grades 1-6 to say their children do their homework in areas where the “TV is on” (22% vs. 17%) and areas where “music is on” (20% vs. 5%).

### ***And, One In Ten Parents (11%) Say Their Child Typically Does Their Homework Alone...***

And when thinking about when their child does their homework, one in ten parents (11%) surveyed say that their child typically does their homework “alone”.

But a good majority of the parents surveyed (82%) say their child typically does their homework with either “a parent nearby, but not in the same room” (50%) or with “a parent beside him/her” (32%).

Only 6% of parents surveyed say their child typically does their homework “with his/her siblings in the room”, and 1% say that they typically do it “with friends”.

- Parents of children in grades 7-9 (20%) are more likely than parents of children in grades 1-6 to say that their child typically does “homework at home alone” (5%).
- Parents of boys (37%) are more likely than parents of girls (28%) to say that their child typically does their homework “with a parent beside him/her”.

Parents surveyed in Quebec are more likely than all other parents surveyed in the rest of Canada to say that:

- Their child typically does their homework “with a parent beside him/her” (44%); or
- That their child typically “does homework at home alone” (15%).



But, parents surveyed in Quebec are the least likely of all parents surveyed in Canada to say that:

- Their child typically does homework “with a parent nearby, but not in the same room” (31% vs. 55% of parents in the rest of Canada).

### ***And Half Of Parents (51%) Spend An Average Of Less Than 10 Minutes A Day Helping Their Children With Their Homework...***

On average half of parents surveyed (51%) spend 1 to 60 minutes a week providing their children with homework support - when stretched over a week this equates to an average of approximately 8.5 minutes a day or less.

However:

- One in seven parents surveyed (16%) say they spend 61-120 minutes a week (approximately 9 - 17 minutes a day) providing homework support for their child; while
- 12% say they spend 121-180 minutes a week (approximately 17-26 minutes a day);
- 5% say they spend 181-240 minutes a week (approximately 26-34 minutes a day);
- 6% say they spend 241-300 minutes a week (approximately 34-43 minutes a day); and
- 4% say they spend 301-600 minutes a week (approximately 43-86 minutes a day) providing homework support for their children.



## ***This Despite The Fact That Almost All Parents (94%) Are Confident In Assisting Their Child With Homework...***

Almost all parents surveyed (94%) are confident in assisting their child with their homework (60% “very confident”, 34% “somewhat confident”). Only 4% of parents survey express a lack of confidence in assisting their child with homework (3% “not very confident”, 1% “not confident at all”).

Meanwhile, 2% of parents could neither express confidence nor a lack of confidence in assisting their child with homework as they do not assist their child with homework.

- Parents of children in grades 1-6 (97%) are more likely than parents of children in grades 7-9 (89%) to be confident in assisting their child with homework.



## **BUT HOW ARE THEIR KIDS DOING IN SCHOOL?**

### ***Nine In Ten Parents (92%) Believe Their Child Is Either Meeting Or Exceeding Their Scholastic Expectations...***

For the most part, 92% of parents surveyed believe their child is meeting or exceeding the scholastic expectations for their grade level. Broken down specifically:

- Half of parents surveyed (53%) believe their child is “right at the grade level” in terms of expectations; while
- 25% believe their child is “slightly ahead of the grade level”; and
- 14% believe their child is “considerably ahead of the grade level”.

However, a small percentage of parents surveyed (8%) believe their child is not meeting the expectations of their grade level, with 7% believing their child is “slightly behind the grade level” and 1% believing their child is “considerably behind the grade level”.

- Parents surveyed in Alberta (44%), Ontario (42%) and British Columbia (42%) appear somewhat more likely to believe that their child is “ahead of grade level” than are parents surveyed in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (36%), Quebec (32%), and Atlantic Canada (31%).



## *With Math (34%) Being The Most Popular Subject For Children According To Parents...*

As part of the survey the parents were asked what school subject their child enjoys most. When ranked according to the percentage of parents that cite the subject as being their child's favourite:

- Math leads the way with 34% of parents citing this subject as their child's favourite; followed by
- Language arts (20%);
- Science (11%);
- Physical education/gym (11%);
- Arts (9%);
- Music (3%);
- Social studies (3%); and lastly
- Other language study (3%).

Any other subjects that are mentioned by less than 3% of the parents surveyed are not included in this list.

A small portion of the parents (4%) either mentioned some "other" subject (2%), or say they "don't know" (2%) what subject their child enjoys most.



Parents of boys are more likely than parents of girls to say their child most enjoys:

- Math (40% vs. 27%);
- Science (15% vs. 7%); and
- Physical education/gym (16% vs. 5%).

Parents of girls are more likely than parents of boys to say their child most enjoys:

- Language Arts (29% vs. 12%); and
- Arts (14% vs. 5%).



## *And, Math Is The Subject That The Largest Portion Of Parents (41%) Say Their Child Does Best In...*

When these parents were also asked what school subject their child does best in, the list ranking falls out in the same order as when it is ranked by the percentage who say it is their child's favourite subject - with:

- Math (41%) being the most popularly cited subject; followed by
- Language arts (27%);
- Science (7%);
- Physical education/gym (5%);
- Arts (5%);
- Other language study (5%); and lastly
- Music (2%).

Any other subjects that are mentioned by 1% of the parents surveyed or less are not included in this list.

Only 1% of parents surveyed say they "don't know" which subject their child does best in.



## ***But Math Is A Two-Sided Sword - As A Large Percentage Of Parents (27%) Say Their Child Enjoys This Subject Least...***

When the parents were asked what school subject their child enjoys least:

- Math leads the way with 27% saying their child enjoys this subject least; followed by
- Language arts (25%);
- Other language study (10%);
- Physical education/ gym (5%);
- Science (5%);
- Arts (4%);
- Social studies (4%);
- Music (3%);
- Geography (3%); and
- History (2%).

Any other subjects that are mentioned by 1% of the parents surveyed or less are not included in this list

A very small minority of the parents surveyed (3%) mention some “other” subject as their child’s favourite, 2% mention “nothing” as being their child’s favourite, and 5% “don’t know” what their child’s favourite school subject is.



## ***Math (23%) And Language Arts (25%) Top The List Of Subjects That Parents Say Their Child Does The Worst In...***

One-quarter of parents surveyed (25%) say that “language arts” is the school subject that their child does worst in, or struggles with the most, while the same proportion (23%) say that their child does worst in “math”.

Among the remaining parents surveyed:

- One in ten (11%) point to “other language study” as the school subject their child does worst in, or struggles with the most;
- 6% point to “physical education/gym”;
- 5% point to “science”;
- 5% point to “arts”;
- 5% point to “social studies”;
- 4% point to “music”;
- 2% point to “geography”; and
- 2% point to “history”.

Of the remaining parents surveyed, 2% mention some “other” subject, 5% mention “nothing” as being their child’s least favourite subject, and 5% “don’t know” what their child’s least favourite subject is.



## WHAT ABOUT EARLY LEARNING AT HOME?

### *Parents, On Average, Think That Early Learning Activities Should Begin At Age 3...*

On average, the parents surveyed say they think it's appropriate to start early learning activities with their children at age 3.

When broken down into ranges, 27% of parents think it is appropriate to start early learning activities with children at 1-12 months, 15% think 13-24 months, 21% think 25-36 months, 15% think 37-48 months, 11% think 49-60 months, 5% think 61-72 months, and 2% think 73-84 months. Only 2% of parents surveyed think that it is appropriate to start early learning activities at ages older than 85 months.

The remaining 2% of parents surveyed "don't know" when to start early learning activities with children.

### *And In Keeping With Their Beliefs, Parents On Average Say They Engaged Their Child In Early Learning Around The Age of 3...*

When the parents were asked at what age they engaged their child in early learning activities, their response, on average, was approximately 3 years of age.

When broken down into ranges, 29% of parents engaged their child in early learning activities with their children at 1-12 months, 17% began at 13-24 months, 23% began at 25-36 months, 12% began at 37-48 months, 8% began at 49-60 months, 5% began at 61-72 months, and 2% began at 73-84 months. Only 2% of parents began to engage their child in early learning activities after 85 months of age, while 2% of players "don't know" what age they engaged their child in early learning activities.



- Parents surveyed in Quebec say that they engaged their child in early learning activities at a substantially older age (almost a year) than parents surveyed in all other regions (3.6 years of age vs. 2.9 in Manitoba/Saskatchewan, 2.8 in British Columbia, 2.6 in Ontario, 2.5 in Alberta, and 2.4 in Atlantic Canada).

## ***When It Comes To Early Learning Activities At Home Most Parents (63%) Read To Their Child Before Their Child Started Attending School...***

Before their child started attending school, many of the parents surveyed undertook a variety of early learning activities with their child. When ranked by the percentage of parents surveyed who say they undertook these learning activities before their child started attending school:

- Having “read to your child” tops the list with 63% of parents saying they did this with their child; followed by
- Using “reading/writing activity books” (42%);
- “Drawing/colouring (including learning colours)” (18%);
- Teaching “math/counting or numbers” (16%);
- Playing memory or puzzle “games” (16%);
- Teaching the “alphabet” (12%);
- Doing “arts and crafts” (6%);
- Playing “music (including singing)” (6%);



- “Going to the library” (6%);
- “Cooking/Measuring ingredients” (6%);
- “Computer/computer games” (5%);
- “Writing/learning to write their name” (5%);
- “Visualization/shape recognition” (4%);
- “Physical education/exercise (including swimming, rollerblade, etc.)” (4%); and lastly
- “Life skills (brushing teeth, manners, grocery shopping, etc.)” (4%).

All other mentions made by less than 4% of the parents surveyed are not included in this list – 2% of respondents stated either they “didn’t do anything” (1%) or “don’t know” what they did (1%) for early learning activities.



## AND WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY GOALS OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO PARENTS?

### *On First Mention The Largest Percentage Of Parents (29%) Point To Attending College Or University...*

When thinking about what they like their child to achieve through education, three in ten parents surveyed (29%) first mention, unaided, that the primary goal for their child's education is to attend college or university.

Other primary goals mentioned include:

- To “get a good job/be successful” (13%);
- “Attend a secondary institution or obtain a secondary degree” (11%);
- “Be happy in life/school (including finding a job or career that makes them happy)” (9%);
- “Life skills/become a valuable member of society (including autonomy)” (9%);
- “Perform to the best of their ability” (9%);
- “Achieving good grades” (9%);
- “Obtain literacy skills” (4%); and

All other mentions made by less than 4% of the parents surveyed are not included in this list – 2% of respondents stated some other goal, while 1% say they “don't know” what the primary goal is for their child's education.



## ***In Total, One-Third Of Parents (36%) Mention Attending College Or University As The Primary Goal Of Their Child's Education...***

When totalling up all of the mentions, attending college or university (36%) emerges as the most common primary goal for their child's education in the minds of the parents surveyed. Following behind this goal are:

- That the "child be happy in life/school (including finding a job or career that makes them happy)" (27%);
- "Get a good job/be successful" (23%);
- "Life skills/become a valuable member of society" (21%);
- "Achieving good grades" (16%);
- "Perform to the best of their ability" (14%);
- "Attend a secondary institution/obtain a secondary degree" (14%);
- "Self-esteem/confidence" (5%); and
- "Obtain literacy skills" (4%).

All other mentions made by less than 4% of the parents surveyed are not included in this list - 7% of respondents stated some "other" goal, while 1% say they "don't know" what the primary goal is for their child's education.



## ***How Do Parents Rank Possible Education Goals By Importance?***

As part of the survey, the parents were read a list of seven possible goals for their children's education. After being read these possible goals, the parents were asked to rank the possible goals in consideration of how important they are to them personally.

When these possible education goals are ordered according to the percentage of parents who rank them as "most important" to them:

1. **"Developing self-management and life skills"** ranks first with 29% of parents surveyed saying this is most important to them, 15% saying this is second most important to them, 14% saying this is third most important, 11% saying this is fourth most important, 11% saying this is fifth most important, 10% saying this is sixth most important, and 11% saying this is the least important to them.
2. **"Developing good reading/literacy skills"** ranks second with 26% of parents surveyed saying this is most important to them, 21% saying this is second most important to them, 19% saying this is third most important, 17% saying this is fourth most important, 9% saying this is fifth most important, 6% saying this is sixth most important, and 2% saying this is the least important to them.
3. **"Developing interpersonal skills"** ranks third with 15% of parents surveyed saying this is most important to them, 19% saying this is second most important to them, 17% saying this is third most important to them, 15% saying this is fourth most important to them, 14% saying this is fifth most important to them, 13% saying this is sixth most important to them, and 6% saying this is the least important to them.
4. **"Developing good study habits"** ranks fourth with 14% of parents surveyed saying this is most important to them, 15% saying this is second most important to them, 12%



saying this is third most important to them, 16% saying this is fourth most important to them, 19% saying this is fifth most important to them, 16% saying this is sixth most important to them, and 8% saying this is the least important to them.

5. **“Achieving good grades”** ranks fifth with 10% of parents surveyed saying this is most important to them, 11% saying this is second most important to them, 10% saying this is third most important to them, 12% saying this is fourth most important to them, 14% saying this is fifth most important to them, 20% saying this is sixth most important to them, and 22% saying this is the least important to them.
6. **“Developing good math/numeric skills”** ranks sixth with 4% of parents saying this is most important to them, 15% saying this is second most important to them, 21% saying this is third most important to them, 20% saying this is fourth most important to them, 20% saying this is fifth most important to them, 13% saying this sixth most important to them, and 7% saying this is the least important to them.
7. **“Developing recreational/leisure skills”** ranks last with less than 1% of parents saying this is most important to them, 4% saying this is second most important to them, 6% saying this is third most important to them, 9% saying this is fourth most important to them, 15% saying this is fifth most important, 22% saying this is sixth most important to them, and 45% saying this is the least important to them.



## AND, WHAT ARE THEIR CHILDREN DOING AFTER SCHOOL?

### *Parents, On Average, Expect Their Children Will Be Enrolled In Two After-School Activities This School Year...*

The parents surveyed, on average, say that their child will be enrolled in approximately 2 after school activities this coming school year. One-quarter of parents surveyed (26%) say their child will be enrolled in 1 after school activity, 34% say their child will be enrolled in 2 after school activities, 16% say their child will be enrolled in 3 after school activities, 5% say their child will be enrolled in 4 after school activities, 3% say their child will be enrolled in 5 after school activities, 1% say their child will be enrolled in 6, and another 1% say their child will be enrolled in 10.

One in ten parents surveyed (12%) say their child will not enrol in any after school activities, and 3% say they “don’t know” how many after school activities their child will be enrolled in.

When comparing means between regions:

- Parents surveyed in British Columbia (2.3) and Manitoba/Saskatchewan (2.3) say their children are enrolled in more after school activities this school year than do parents surveyed in Atlantic Canada (2.1), Ontario (2.0), Alberta (1.9), or Quebec (1.6).



## *Team Sports Such As Hockey, Baseball And Soccer Are the Most Popular Choice For After School Activities...*

When asked what kind of after school activities their child will be enrolled in during the school year – including classes, clubs or organized sports – the parents surveyed provide a variety of responses.

- Six in ten parents (57%) say their child will be enrolled in a “team sport” like hockey, baseball, soccer or basketball;
- 43% say their child will be enrolled in an “individual sports” like swimming, gymnastics or karate;
- 31% say their child will be enrolled in “music”;
- 15% say their child will be enrolled in “clubs like boy/girl scouts”;
- 15% say their child will be enrolled in “school clubs”;
- 12% say their child will be enrolled in “dance”;
- 6% say their child will be enrolled in “religious education classes”;
- 4% say their child will be enrolled in “supplemental education/tutoring”; and
- 3% say their child will be enrolled in “arts”.

All other mentions provided by less than 3% of parents surveyed are not included in this list.

A few of the parents surveyed (4%) mention some “other” school activity, while 2% of parents “don’t know” what after school activity their child will enrol in.



## ***And When Parents Are Asked How Much Time These Activities Will Take - On Average, Parents Think 4.6 Hours...***

Parents surveyed, on average, expect their child will spend 4.6 hours on after school activities each week. Broken down into ranges: 8% of parents surveyed expect after hours activities to take 1 hour or less, 19% expect 1 to 2 hours, 22% expect 2 to 3 hours, 15% expect 3 to 4 hours, 12% expect 4 to 5 hours, 7% expect 5 to 6 hours, and 16% expect more than 6 hours a week. The remaining 1% of parents surveyed “don’t know” how long they expect their child will spend on these activities each week.

- On average, children in grades 7 to 9 (5.5 hours) will spend more time weekly on after school activities than children in grades 1-6 (4 hours).

## ***But, Nine In Ten Parents (89%) Are Managing Their Child’s Extracurricular Activities Well...***

An overwhelming majority of parents surveyed (89%) are handling their child’s extracurricular activities well – 49% are managing these activities “very well” and 40% are managing these activities “well”. However, one in ten parents surveyed (10%) are managing their child’s extracurricular activities “with some difficulty”.

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